1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
AD5 Taiwan Hokkien AD5

We will also see that although some religious or magical act is performed in the village almost every day of the week, either by a family or by the village as a whole, this is not necessarily an indication of piety and veneration as the West understands religion. For the Taiwanese villager, the observances are not necessarily sacred only; many villagers have pointed out that they "make life interesting and exciting, and the people look forward to them with great enthusiasm." Not only do such activities have a significant function in Taiwanese society but, as we shall see, many villagers are extremely aware of the importance of many rituals to the continuity of their society and patterns of living.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SUPERNATURAL BELIEFS AND ACTIVITIES

The villagers' practices are not based on a strong belief in any single concept of the supernatural. There is, in fact, so complete a mixture of religious and magical beliefs in the village that it is often difficult to determine where one form ends and another begins. While elements of popular Taoism and ancestor worship are the strongest and most apparent, there is a clearly Buddhist influence, and the moral and ethical teachings of Confucianism are extremely evident. There are also important elements of animism out of which has "grown a complex of attitudes and values" (Kulp, 1925:284) and a system of divination by which the "spirits of wind and water" (Kulp, 1925:284) may be controlled; this is referred to as geomancy (*feng-shui*).

The funeral ceremony (described in Chapter 7) clearly shows the presence of this admixture in the villagers' beliefs. There are elements of Taoism and Buddhism in the ritual of the journey of the spirit of the dead to the underworld for final judgment, punishment, and rebirth in the next world, but there are also evident Confucian teachings and even remnants of animistic beliefs. It is perhaps most accurate to say that all these beliefs have been combined into a single loose system, and the average believer makes no attempt to define or distinguish the different elements of the whole.

Confucianism

While Confucianism is closely integrated within the religious system, there is no formal cult or official Confucian ritual in Hsin Hsing village. Although there is a Confucian temple in Lukang, usually only residents of that city worship there.[1] However, the moral and ethical teachings of Confucianism are present in the rules of correct behavior which have been passed down from generation to generation of villagers. Filial piety, respect for age and authority, and worship of

1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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population. Hsin Hsing village owns the statues of two gods: one of the main village god, Ta Shih Kung, who is said to have accompanied the original founders of the village from the mainland, and one of the Earth God T'u Ti Kung. These statues were purchased with "public money" collected for religious purposes.

Some individual families have statues of personal or private gods whom they worship. There are two families in Hsin Hsing which have private gods: one of these gods, Er Shih Kung, has become very important in the village. He is considered powerful, his aid is frequently sought, and many of the villagers worship him on his birthday. The other private god is worshipped by only the one family. Their origins are unknown; according to the owners, the gods came from the mainland with their ancestors.

Origins of such private or personal gods are varied. Sometimes the origin is a vision. This is the case with one man in the area. For years he had been plagued by bad luck. He had no children and could not make an adequate living. One stormy night, walking through a wooded area, he was frightened by a flash of lightning, which showed him the form of a man in ancient costume high up in a tree. Fearing for his life, he claims that he immediately vowed to build a statue in the image of the vision and worship it as a god. In the twenty years since that day his fortunes have changed, and today he is a wealthy man with many children.

The great importance one of the private gods in Hsin Hsing has taken on has enhanced the prestige and prominence of the K'ang family which owns his statue. The majority of the villagers worship Er Shih Kung each year and frequently go to him for aid in time of illness or other emergency. Each time this is done, the contribution of the K'ang family to the village welfare is recognized. The family receives certain material benefits from the villagers, and families which feel they have benefited from Er Shih Kung's help feel a sense of obligation to the K'ang family. As a result, they feel obliged to help whenever the K'ang family needs some kind of favor. Each of the many village families which join in the *pai-pai* held by the K'ang family for Er Shih Kung on his birthday contributes several large, sweet, steamed cakes as sacrifices. These are kept by the K'ang family as custodians of this useful deity.

However, some village families feel a degree of antagonism towards the K'ang family; they feel that the K'angs are abusing their position. The most bitter antagonism is that of the Huangs, the family which owns the other personal god, which the village does not recognize. The Huang family is bitter about the situation and is joined in its antipathy by some others who appear to have been stirred up by its many criticisms of the K'angs. However, despite the bitterness, the two